



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 17, 1998

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CHAIRMAN SPENCE STATEMENT ON MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ

U.S. Representative Floyd Spence (R-SC), Chairman of the House National Security Committee, today made the following statement regarding the military strikes against Iraq:

"I am pleased that the House of Representatives moved quickly today to pass with overwhelming support a resolution expressing the strong support of the Congress for the courageous, patriotic, and dedicated service of our men and women in uniform serving in the Persian Gulf who have been called to conduct military strikes against Iraq.

"Once again, the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines of the United States Armed Forces have demonstrated that they comprise the finest military in the world. For years they have selflessly defended America's national security interests in the Persian Gulf, at great personal sacrifice. All Americans can be proud of the way our troops have performed. They are a credit to our nation and an inspiration to us all.

"It is unfortunate that the situation with regard to Iraq has come to this point. For the past eight years since the end of the Gulf War, Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, has repeatedly defied the will of the international community and ignored all resolutions of the United Nations Security Council designed to ensure that Iraq could not reconstitute its weapons of mass destruction capability.

"While I have long supported and continue to support a more assertive strategy for dealing with Saddam Hussein, the timing and nature of today's attack raise serious questions in my mind.

"First, it remains unclear what compelling circumstances led to the particular timing of this attack, which has cast an unfortunate shadow over the legitimacy and credibility of this action. However, even if strikes against Iraq are justified under the circumstances - and I believe that strikes to prevent Saddam Hussein's development of weapons of mass destruction are overdue - much if not all of the geopolitical, strategic and military value may be lost by the context and circumstances under which these strikes are being carried out.

"Second, while the precise details are still unknown, I remain concerned that any military action taken must be of sufficient scope and impact to justify the inevitable diplomatic damage that will result in the region and the likely end of the current UN inspection regime, as imperfect as it may be. The Administration's history

of resorting to largely symbolic retaliatory ‘pinprick’ attacks in the past has undermined U.S. credibility in the region and devalued the use of military force as the consequence of Iraqi misbehavior.

“Finally, the Administration has repeatedly failed to answer the ‘what’s next’ question. As long as Saddam Hussein remains in power he will continue to threaten our interests and our friends in the vital Persian Gulf region. In fact, allowing Saddam to acquire weapons of mass destruction combined with his determined efforts to field a ballistic missile capability, poses a serious regional and global threat. Yet, by the President’s admission, these strikes are unlikely to oust Saddam from power. Until we craft a credible strategy that achieves that goal, we will likely be conducting such strikes again and again, and reaping diminishing returns.

“Once again, I join all my colleagues in the Congress in supporting our brave men and women in uniform for their courageous, patriotic and dedicated service to our country. They have selflessly defended America’s national interests in the Persian Gulf for years and all Americans can be proud of their performance and dedication. However, now that we have crossed the threshold of battle, I urge the President to pursue a comprehensive and sustained military campaign to significantly reduce the ability of Saddam Hussein to pose a threat to the region and our allies.”

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